

REFLECTIONS OF HOPE

STUDY GUIDE

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LESSON 1:
JESUS, OUR LOVING PURSUER
Rivka: Does He see me?

Getting to know you... Share briefly (1-2 minutes each) a little of your story in the following areas:

- What is your spiritual background?

Where are you on your faith journey? Are you, like Rivka, wondering if God even sees you? Do you, like Mary Magdalene, know and walk closely with Jesus? Or are you somewhere in between?

WATCH

Resource DVD-ROM Clip #1 or Movie DVD - Introduction: 1:00 minute.

KNOW

In the film Rivka says: *“The God who created all of this? I doubt He even sees me, much less knows me. Perhaps God Almighty would love a holy man, but not someone like me.”*

Like Mary Magdalene, Rivka and the other women in the film, every woman has a story to tell. You have a story to tell. Your story has a beginning, middle and eventually, an ending. Interwoven into each of our stories is visible proof of a Loving Pursuer—the One who created you with a purpose and gives life and meaning to your story. During these next few weeks, may you come to know and see, as Rivka eventually did, that you matter to God. He sees you and He knows you!

DID YOU KNOW?

In a speech, Dr. Larry Crabb, a well known Christian psychologist, author and speaker said, “The core terror of women is invisibility.” Do you agree with that? Why or why not?

One of the names for God in the Bible is *El Roi*, which means “The God who sees.”

LIVE

No matter where you are in your journey, you are precious to God. Even *before* He created you, He saw you and knew you.

God Sees You:

You are the One who put me together inside my mother’s body, and I praise You because of the wonderful way You created me. Everything You do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt. Nothing about me is hidden from You! I was secretly woven together deep in the earth below, but with Your own eyes You saw my body being formed. Even before I was born, You had written in Your book everything I would do. Your thoughts are far beyond my understanding, much more than I could ever imagine. I try to count Your thoughts, but they

outnumber the grains of sand on the beach. And when I awake, I will find you nearby (Psalm 139:13-18, CEV - Contemporary English Version).

- What stirs in your heart when you hear these words?

- Is it hard to believe that God made you the way you are? Why or why not?

In the Bible, **Colossians 1:15-16** (CEV) says:

Christ is exactly like God, who cannot be seen. He is the first-born Son, superior to all creation. Everything was created by Him, everything in heaven and on earth, everything seen and unseen, including all forces and powers, and all rulers and authorities. All things were created by God's Son, and everything was made for Him.

- Who created you? For what purpose?

- What importance does this have for you?

God Knows You:

You have looked deep into my heart, LORD, and You know all about me. You know when I am resting or when I am working, and from heaven You discover my thoughts. You notice everything I do and everywhere I go. Before I even speak a word You know what I will say, and with Your powerful arm You protect me from every side. I can't understand all of this! Such wonderful knowledge is far above me (Psalm 139:1-6, CEV).

- What does this passage tell you about God?

- Does it change your view of Him? If so, how?

- What does this passage tell you about how God feels about you?

- ♥ How does that make you feel?

How humbling and amazing it is that even though God knows everything about you (the good, the bad and the ugly!), He still wants a loving relationship with you. He pursues you. He loves you.

God Loves You:

I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love—not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, and not powers above or powers below. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39, CEV).

TELL

Challenge: Perhaps you are like Rivka and have long wondered if God knows you or even sees you. At the end of the movie, Rivka chose to believe that God really does love her and she placed her faith in Jesus. Through a simple prayer, like the one below, you too can choose to believe that Jesus created you, sees you, knows you and loves you. *You!* Will you tell Him today that you believe?

God, my Father in heaven, You are holy and righteous. Thank You that You love me. I have sinned against You. Thank You that You sent the promised Messiah, Jesus, to destroy the curse of shame and guilt. Thank You that He died in my place. I want to follow my living Savior. Thank You for forgiving me and accepting me. Amen.

Go Deeper: Whether you already have chosen to believe these truths about Jesus, or you still struggle with doubting them, take some time this week to talk to God about your doubts. Review any of the above verses and reflect on them throughout the week. If God teaches you anything about your doubts, please consider sharing with the group next week.



LESSON 2:
JESUS, OUR GRACIOUS FORGIVER
Adulterous Woman: *Will He forgive me?*

SHARE

Would anyone like to share if you reflected on the verses from last week? Did God reveal anything to you about your doubts?

WATCH

Resource DVD-ROM Clip #2 or Movie DVD - Chapter 12; The adulterous woman forgiven; 3:00 minutes.

KNOW

In the Bible, **John 8:1-11** (NIV - New International Version) says:

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn He appeared again in the temple courts; where all the people gathered around Him, and He sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do You say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing Him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. When they kept on questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

DID YOU KNOW?

In Jesus’ day, adultery was a capital offense in Israel.

Religious leaders knew **Leviticus 20:10** (CEV), part of the Law of Moses, which says, *“If there is a man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, one who commits adultery with his friend’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.”*

- What do you think this woman’s struggle was?

- Where was her partner? What does this tell us about the accusers?

- How do you think she felt after being caught and dragged out in public by a mob?

- ♥ How would you feel about having your wrongdoings exposed?

In the same way, when we do something against the law, something that hurts another person, or something that hurts God, He takes those things very seriously and calls them sin. Sin is going our own way, thinking our own thoughts and doing what we want, rather than what God wants. Sin can involve either attitudes or actions or both.

God's standards in the Bible show us His heart, and when we rebel against them and pursue our own desires, we miss God's best for us and we grieve Him.

- How does Jesus respond to this woman and provide for her in her situation?

- Why did Jesus' response mean so much to her?

- Did the adulterous woman have to do anything to be forgiven?

This is how a relationship with God differs from being religious. Religion says you do what is right in order to earn acceptance, love and forgiveness. A relationship with God through Jesus Christ is not based on our performance because *we already are* accepted, loved and forgiven.

LIVE

Life & Death are significant words in the Bible. The Bible refers to spiritual life and death as well as physical life and death.

John 17:3 (NASB - New American Standard Bible) refers to spiritual life: *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*

The following verses refer to *spiritual* death.

Colossians 2:13-14 (CEV) says:

You were dead, because you were sinful and were not God’s people. But God let Christ make you alive, when He forgave all our sins. God wiped out the charges that were against us for disobeying the Law of Moses. He took them away and nailed them to the cross.

- According to these verses, what happened to the “charges against us?”

We don’t live by the “Law of Moses,” which is referred to in the verse above, yet we all live by some sort of moral, ethical and cultural code that resides within us. As women we tend to put ourselves under a high level of pressure to perform well. When we fail, we try our best to cover up our imperfections.

God tells us in **Romans 8:1** (NIV), *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

- According to this verse, what is true of those who are “in Christ Jesus?”
- How can knowing we are not condemned change the way we view ourselves?

- ❑ How does this fact apply to how we treat others?

When Jesus talked with this woman caught in sin, He did forgive her but He also stated, “*Go now and leave your life of sin.*” He was telling her to embrace her new identity as someone who is free and forgiven. In the same way, we are forgiven, but with that freedom comes responsibility and a new identity. This doesn’t mean that we will never fail again, but it does set a new direction in our lives.

1 John 1:9-10 (NIV) says:

“If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives.”

- ❑ So when we do fail, how do we get right with God again?

TELL

Challenge: Confession means that we agree with God about any wrong thoughts, attitudes or actions. We agree with Him that they are wrong, ask forgiveness and acknowledge that we already are forgiven by God because of Christ’s death on the cross.

Let’s make confession practical:

1. Make your own sin list on a piece of paper and then destroy it. This list is just between you and God, so be completely honest. Silently ask God to help you see the things in your life that displease Him. Write down whatever God brings to your mind. As you write each one, confess it to God. Remember you have a loving God who forgives you—He even gave His Son for you!
2. After you have written your list, write the words of **1 John 1:9** (NIV) across your list. It says, “*If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*”

3. When you have completed your time of prayer and confession, thank Him for His forgiveness by faith, and then destroy your list as an illustration of the forgiveness God has granted you by tearing it to pieces, shredding it or burning it in order to show how completely God has forgiven you.
 - Going Deeper:** Where is your sin (sin list) now?

Being forgiven brings freedom from guilt!

Psalm 103:12 (NIV) says:

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

Hebrews 10:17 (NIV) says:

“Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”

This week, ask God to reveal your sin as it happens. Confess it to God, ask forgiveness and thank Him for forgiving you.



LESSON 3:
JESUS, OUR POWER FOR LIVING
Mary, Mother of Jesus: *Strength for daily life*

SHARE

Would anyone be willing to share if God showed you sin in your life as it happened this week? How did you respond?

WATCH

Resource DVD-ROM clip #3 or movie DVD - Chapter 3; The Birth of Jesus; 1:40 minutes.

KNOW

Luke 1:26-38 (NIV) says:

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Mary was going about her daily activities when the angel Gabriel encountered her and told her that she would have a child. We all know that it is impossible to have a baby without being intimate with a man. When Mary posed this question to Gabriel, his response was "For nothing is impossible with God." He explained to Mary that in order for this to occur, "The Holy Spirit will come and God's power will overshadow you."

- ❑ What kinds of things could Mary have been thinking and feeling when she heard Gabriel's message?

- Even though Mary could have been thinking and feeling a number of things, what was her actual response?

- How do you think you would have responded?

DID YOU KNOW?

Mary was *betrothed* to Joseph which, in her culture, was a promise as strong as marriage. Though Mary still lived with her family, she was legally considered Joseph's wife. If she was suspected of being unfaithful, Joseph had the right to have her killed like the woman caught in adultery or at least force her to leave the town in shame and disgrace. Therefore, Mary's pregnancy was a huge ordeal to both of them.

Her choice to be obedient demonstrated faith, especially in light of the consequences that she faced.

LIVE

In one moment, Mary's life forever changed as a result of God choosing to use her to carry out a task that in human terms would be impossible. But as the angel Gabriel said, "Nothing is impossible with God." None of us will be asked to carry the Son of God as Mary was. However, God does ask us to do something that is also impossible—to faithfully follow Jesus every day.

Someone has said that to live the Christian life is not difficult; it is impossible.

The following verses show how impossible it is to live life as a Christian without the help of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 16:24 (NIV) says, "*Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.'*"

James 1:26 (NIV) says, *“If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.”*

Matthew 5:48 (NIV) says, *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

☐ According to these verses, how should we be living our lives?

♥ So, how are you doing?

In our own power, these commands are impossible, but God does not expect us to follow Jesus in our own strength. The Christian life is a supernatural life and only Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit can enable you to live it.

Let’s look at how the Holy Spirit empowers us to live the Christian life.

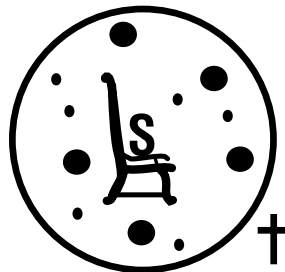
The Bible tells us there are three kinds of people.

1. The **natural person** is described as never having invited Jesus into his/her life.

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NASB) says, *“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”* Some words that characterize the natural person are pride, fear, guilt, worry and disobedience.

Self-Directed Life (natural person)

- S** - Self is on the throne
- † - Christ is outside the life
- - Interests are directed by self, often resulting in discord and frustration

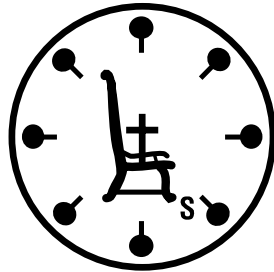


2. The **spiritual person** is described as being directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:15 (NASB) says, “*But he who is spiritual appraises all things...*” Some words that characterize the spiritual person are *trust, obedience, peace, forgiveness and love.*

Christ-Directed Life (spiritual person)

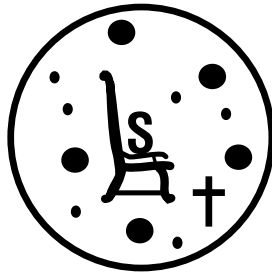
- † - Christ is in the life and on the throne
- S - Self is yielding to Christ
- - Interests are directed by Christ, resulting in harmony with God’s plan



3. The **carnal person** is described as someone who has invited Jesus into his/her life, but lives in defeat trying to follow Jesus in his/her own strength.
- 1 Corinthians 3:1** (CEV) says, “*My friends, you are acting like the people of this world. That’s why I could not speak to you as spiritual people. You are like babies as far as your faith in Christ is concerned.*” Some words and phrases that characterize the carnal person are frustrated, defeated, self-righteous, little desire for growth, and an up-and-down spiritual experience.

Self-Directed Life (carnal person)

- S - Self is on the throne
- † - Christ dethroned and not allowed to direct the life
- - Interests are directed by self, often resulting in discord and frustration



- ♥ Which of the three diagrams best describes your life?
- ♥ Which person would you like to be?

Most people want to be directed by the Holy Spirit. Let’s look at how to live a Spirit-filled life.

In the Bible, we see God represented in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God has provided us with the Holy Spirit to live inside us to give us the power we need to live life as followers of Christ. Although the Holy Spirit lives in all people who have invited Christ into their lives, we are not filled with the Holy Spirit unless we allow Him to direct and empower us. We choose to be filled (directed and empowered) with the Holy Spirit through faith on a daily, even moment-by-moment basis. This is the difference between the spiritual person and the carnal person.

The Bible gives us a command to be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 (NIV) says, “*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*”

We know that being filled by the Holy Spirit is God’s will for us because He commands it. We have God’s promise in **1 John 5:14-15** (NIV—emphasis added) which says:

*“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we **know** that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.”*

TELL ME MORE

Spiritual breathing is a powerful word picture which can help you experience moment-by-moment dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Just as we physically breathe out bad air and in good air, we can practice spiritual breathing.

Exhale: Confess your sin the moment you become aware of it—agree with God that you are wrong and thank Him for His forgiveness.

Inhale: Surrender control of your life to Christ, and rely on the Holy Spirit to fill you with His presence and power by faith.

Just like Mary responded in faith by trusting God in her situation, we also need to respond in faith by trusting God to live the Christian life through us.

- How can you, like Mary, respond to the Lord?

- How are we filled with the Holy Spirit?

TELL

Challenge: Begin each day this week by asking God to allow His Holy Spirit to direct your life. Share with at least one person what you have learned this week about the Holy Spirit.

Go Deeper: To learn more about how the Holy Spirit can be active in your life, read and reflect on the following passages: **Galatians 5:16-26**, **Romans 5:1**, **Romans 8:1** and **Ephesians 5:18**. You can also read the booklet, *Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-Filled Life?* by Bill Bright. It can be ordered through Campus Crusade for Christ or found online at: www.greatcom.org/english/spirit.htm.



LESSON 4:
JESUS, OUR POWERFUL DELIVERER
Mary Magdalene: *Will He free me?*

SHARE

Did you have an opportunity to talk with someone about the Holy Spirit last week? What happened? Did you see a difference in your life last week after asking the Holy Spirit to direct you?

WATCH

Resource DVD-ROM Clip # 4 or Movie DVD - Chapter 5; Mary Magdalene is freed from demons; 5:07 minutes.

KNOW

Luke 8:1-3 (NIV) says:

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve [the disciples] were with Him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

- What do you think Mary Magdalene's life was like before she encountered Jesus?

- Why didn't she do anything to get rid of the demons herself?

- How did people respond to her?

DID YOU KNOW?

In the culture of the day, being near someone who was inhabited and controlled by evil spirits would make you unclean, and therefore unable to go to the Temple or even associate with others of the community until you were considered clean again.

In the Old Testament, God established many "rules" for the Jewish people to follow. He gave rules that determined whether someone was ceremonially clean or unclean. When a person was "unclean," it basically meant he or she had to be separated from the people and from God. They had to wait until they were ceremonially clean before they could again be in fellowship with God and with others.

- In the film, how did Jesus respond to Mary Magdalene and the possibility of becoming unclean Himself?

- Why do you think the evil spirits left when Jesus commanded them to leave?

Hebrews 1:1-3a (NIV) says: *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

Luke 3:21-22 (NIV) says: *When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And the voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased."*

Jeremiah 32:17 (NIV) says, *"Ah, Sovereign LORD, You have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You."*

- What do these verses say about who Jesus is and His power?

- How was Mary Magdalene's life changed as a result of her encounter with Jesus?

- ♥ Is God speaking to you through Mary's story? What do you need to be freed from in your life?

LIVE

Through our relationship with God, Jesus can also deliver us from any ongoing struggles. In our world today we find people reaching for all types of things to provide a temporary level of comfort. These may include food, shopping, money, gambling, alcohol, drugs, pornography, television or the Internet. Although the level of dependency may vary, we all sometimes seek something external to soothe our internal pain.

No matter what your struggle may be, they all have the same effect—they keep us from experiencing the fullness of God's power in our lives.

Like Mary Magdalene, we can be released from the power of bondage to live a life where we can experience God's freedom and purpose. Through Christ's power, we can begin to live in true freedom, overcoming the hold that negative influences can have over our lives.

Remember, when following Christ, our struggles may not end. God can give us the power to endure and persevere, and He can use these things to build desired qualities in our lives.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NIV) says: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

James 1:2-4 (NIV) says: *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

- ♥ What in your life would be different if you relied on God when you have struggles?

TELL

No matter where we are in our faith journey, we all have struggles. Mary Magdalene's struggle was with evil spirits and Jesus was her powerful deliverer. Regardless of what your struggle is today, Jesus wants to be your powerful deliverer.

Challenge: This week, can you entrust an area of struggle or difficulty to God and ask Him to give you freedom? Share with another person what you are learning.

Go deeper: Write out and commit to memory **Hebrews 12:1-2** (quoted earlier) and ask God to help you understand and live out this truth.



LESSON 5:
JESUS, OUR COMPASSIONATE PROVIDER
Widow of Nain: *Will He take care of me?*

SHARE

Would anyone be willing to share about the struggle/difficulty that you entrusted to God this week?

Would anyone like to recite **Hebrews 12:1-2** (NIV) from memory? If not, let's read it together. *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

WATCH

Resource DVD-ROM Clip #5 or Movie DVD - Chapter 6; Jesus heals and teaches; 1:00 minute.

KNOW

Luke 7:11-17 (NIV) says: *Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and His disciples and a large crowd went along with Him. As He approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, His heart went out to her and He said, “Don’t cry.”*

Then He went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

DID YOU KNOW?

Adapted from source: www.stathanasius.org/bible/oct_8_2000.html

From the events described in Luke, it appears that the widow of Nain was not well off financially. First, the dead man was being carried in an open coffin (v.14). Second, when Jesus spoke to him, “Young man, I say to you, arise” (v.14), he sat up and began to speak immediately. There was no need to unbind the widow’s son from any burial wrappings, for there were none. From the open coffin and lack of burial wrappings, we can assume he was being carried to a pauper’s grave. Clearly, the widow was very poor.

*Under Mosaic Law, virtually no special provisions were made for widows because the oldest son - who had the birthright or extra share of the property - had the duty to provide for her. Additionally, the Scribes and Pharisees of that day were known for foreclosing on widows’ houses when the poverty-stricken widows ran out of money (see **Matthew 23:14**, NASB).*

- What was this woman's need when Jesus saw her?

- How did Jesus respond to her and provide for her in this situation?

- What did it mean to the widow that Jesus raised her son from the dead?

Psalm 68:5 (NIV) says, "*A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling.*"

- What does this passage tell us about God's character?

LIVE

Like the widow we all experience circumstances that seem overwhelming. We may feel hopeless, lost, grieved, anxious, depressed, fearful or even despondent.

- ♥ Are you struggling with something right now?

Philippians 4:6-7, 19 (NIV) says: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds, in Christ Jesus.... And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

- What needs are included in the word "all" in these verses?

- What does God promise He will do?

- Since God's promise is to meet every need, what do we need to do?

- When it seems like God is not meeting our needs immediately, can we still trust Him?

1 Peter 5:7 (NIV) says, *“Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.”*

Matthew 6:31-34 (NIV) says, *“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*

- What does God ask us to do in these verses?

- What do you think it means to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness?”

- What are some practical ways to apply these truths to your life?

TELL

- ❑ How do we cast our anxiety and burdens on Him? (see **1 Peter 5:7**)

TELL ME MORE

In the Bible, “to cast” refers to physically putting a load on an animal like a donkey or an ox. Jesus invites us to literally “cast” our burdens and anxiety upon Him.

Challenge: Do you have some things you need to “cast” on God? For example: finances, relationships, physical needs (food, clothes, health, housing), emotional needs (fear, anxiety, guilt, shame, loneliness, depression), work.

Matthew 11:28 (NIV) says, “*Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*”

Go Deeper: Make a commitment to ask God to provide for you in the most critical area of your life. Share next week what has happened in response to your prayers.



LESSON 6:
JESUS, OUR COMPLETE RESTORER
Woman Healed of Bleeding: *Will He heal me?*

SHARE

Did you ask God to provide for you in a critical area this past week? What happened?

WATCH

Resource DVD-ROM Clip #6 or Movie DVD - Chapter 9; Jesus heals a dead girl and a bleeding woman; 3:00 minutes.

KNOW

Mark 5:25-34 (NIV) says: *And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His cloak, because she thought, "If I just touch His clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.*

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from Him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

"You see the people crowding against You," His disciples answered, "and yet You can ask, 'Who touched Me?'"

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at His feet and, trembling with fear, told Him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

Many scholars agree that this hemorrhage was related to her menstrual cycle. According to Old Testament law, a hemorrhaging woman could not enter God's presence or be touched by another Jew. Any physical contact would make the other person unclean.

- We have read about this woman's physical suffering, in what other ways might this woman have been hurting?

- ♥ Desperation pushes us to try anything. In what ways have you tried to find an answer to your situation? How far do you think Jesus is from your reach?

Regardless of the possible consequences for herself, the hemorrhaging woman was desperate and determined to see Jesus. In order to touch Jesus, the woman had to elbow her way through the crowd that stood in her way. She had confidence that only Jesus could help her.

- What did she believe that gave her the courage to push through the crowd?

- What did Jesus restore by healing her?

- ♥ What is preventing you from reaching out to Jesus?

God really cares about restoring all the different areas of your life because He deeply cares about you. *“I don’t know which brings greater healing, Jesus’ power or His compassion.”* – Mary Magdalene, in *Magdalena: Released From Shame*

LIVE

Restoration can be a process. After waiting 12 long years and spending all her money the day came when she met Jesus and glorified God through being healed by Him in response to her faith. God is in control of all things and has His own timetable for us. Even when we have faith like this woman did, He sometimes answers us in a different way, or at a different time than we might expect. It is important for us to be willing to accept His will for us no matter what the answer.

Hebrews 4:15-16 (NIV) says: *Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because He was tempted in every way that we are. But He did not sin! So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved kindness and we will find help.*

- How does Jesus respond to us when we come to Him?

This woman received from Jesus exactly what she desired—her physical healing. Not everyone gets exactly what they desire. Paul gives us an example from his personal experience in **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** (NIV): *To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassing great revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

God did not heal Paul when he asked, so he was forced to depend on the Lord’s strength in the midst of his weakness. Likewise, God does not always heal our physical problems, but He always enables and strengthens us to endure the problem.

James 1:2-4 (NIV) says: *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

- According to these verses, what are some of the reasons God may choose not to restore us or answer our prayers the way we expect?

TELL

2 Corinthians 1:3-5 (NIV) says: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.*

As Christians, we are not immune from difficulties. The way Jesus helps us becomes part of our story and can encourage others who may be going through something similar. The comfort and healing that God gives is not intended just for us. We glorify God and give Him praise when we share with others what He has done for us.

Challenge: If God has offered you restoration in an area, look for an opportunity this week to share your story with someone who needs encouragement.

Go Deeper: Write down some areas in your life that need restoration. These could be physical, relational, spiritual or others. Commit those to the Lord and believe by faith that He will restore them.

If you have an area that has not been restored in the way you desire, entrust that to God. Thank Him by faith for whatever His answer is. The act of thanking God demonstrates faith. Don't stop trusting in God's goodness. He is a good God and He loves you!

Please be aware that many of us have deep and complex issues. This may mean seeking the guidance of a trusted friend, pastor or a professional counselor. Do not be afraid to seek further assistance to find complete restoration. Ask God to help you find the right person to help.

Optional: Personal story 3 in Appendix B.



LESSON 7:
JESUS, OUR LIVING WATER
Woman at the Well: *Will He satisfy me?*

SHARE

How has God encouraged you this week in an area of your life that needs restoration?

If you had an opportunity this week to encourage someone with your story, would you be willing to share?

WATCH

Resource DVD-ROM Clip # 7 or Movie DVD - Chapter 7; The woman at the well; 5:45 minutes.

KNOW

John 4:7, 9-26, 28-30, 39-40 (NIV) says:

Jesus was traveling with His disciples from Judea to Galilee and had to pass through Samaria where they stopped to rest about mid-day near a well made by the patriarch Jacob.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give Me a drink?” (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can You ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can You get this living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

“I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am He."

Just then His disciples returned and were surprised to find Him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are You talking with her?"

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" They came out of the town and made their way toward Him.

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay with them, and He stayed two days. And because of His words many more became believers.

They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

- What is this woman's story?

DID YOU KNOW?

It was culturally unacceptable for a man and a woman who were strangers to converse in first century Palestine.

There was also great racial tension between Jews and Samaritans at that time, as the Samaritans were a mixed race. The woman even asks, *“How is it that you a Jew ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?”* To Jews at that time, the word “Samaritan” was like another word for “dog.” The Jews often would walk miles out of their way to avoid going through Samaria and having contact with the Samaritans.

The fact that this woman came to the well at mid-day tells us something about her. She was probably labeled an outcast for her immoral behavior and thus socially rejected.

The Samaritan woman did not even expect Jesus to speak to her much less ask her for a cup of water.

- Jesus initiated a conversation with this woman. What does this reveal to us about His character?

- Why do you think Jesus asked the Samaritan woman about her husband?

Jesus spoke frankly about the woman's past and present living situation. Nothing about her life was hidden from Him. He understood the pain and brokenness in her life. He does not reject her. He compassionately shows her the way to life which is Himself.

- How was the Samaritan woman trying to meet her own needs?

- ❑ What are ways that we try to meet our own needs today?

- ❑ How does Jesus say He would meet her needs? How does that apply to us?

LIVE

People who truly believe in Jesus begin to experience a change in themselves, their attitudes and their perspectives. They become “new people.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) says, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.*” The Samaritan woman’s immediate response to go tell others in her town shows that she believed in Jesus and became a new person.

Three things happened as a result of the conversation that the Samaritan woman had with Jesus. Her past no longer separated her from a relationship with God. Many people in the town became believers along with her. Jesus’ followers saw Him reach across cultural and racial lines.

Galatians 3:28 (NIV) says, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*”

John 7:37-39 (NIV) says: *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

- ❑ What does it mean to have living water flowing from us?

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV) says, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

When we allow the Holy Spirit to direct our lives, we begin to see Him change us from within and others will see this fruit in our lives.

TELL

- What kind of person did Jesus say the Father is seeking? (See passage at the beginning of this lesson.)

Although we don't know who will respond, we like the Samaritan woman need to tell others about what God has done for us.

John 4:39 (NIV) says, *“Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony, ‘He told me everything I ever did.’”*

The outcast woman became the hero of the town. Jesus reconciled the woman to Himself, and then He used her to bring many in the town to God.

Challenge: Who in your life still needs to hear about what God has done for you? Telling others your story is one way to be a true worshipper. Make a list of people and begin to pray that when they hear about Jesus they will respond like the Samaritans did.

Next week's celebration will have a time of sharing. The following questions can give you some direction in your thinking.

- Has your view of Jesus changed during this study? If so, how?
- What is one area in your life that you want to develop as a result of this study?
- How has Jesus touched your life while we have been studying about Him together?



LESSON 8: JESUS, OUR LIFELONG FRIEND Let's Celebrate!

This is a time to celebrate what God has done during this study! We're going to have a party! The idea is to celebrate all that God has done during this study.

Who do you know that would benefit from watching *Magdalena: Released From Shame*, and sharing in the Bible study? Make a list of these people right now. Remember how watching the film opened your heart to God? Imagine how it could open your friends' hearts too!

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Ten Basic Steps for Christian Maturity by Dr. Bill Bright
How to Forgive... When You Don't Feel Like It by June Hunt
Seeing Yourself Through God's Eyes by June Hunt
Lord, I Want To Know You by Kay Arthur
Practical Christian Living developed by Priority Associates

